THE

Poor Man's

PLEA

To all the

Proclamations, Declarations, Acts of Parliament, &c.

WHICH

Have been, or ſhall be made, or publiſh'd, for a Reformation of Manners, and ſuppreſſing Immorality in the Nation.

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THE

PREFACE.

REformation of Manners is a Work ſo Honourable, and at This Time ſo abſolutely neceſſary, that, like the Reform of our Money, it can be no longer delayed.

The Ways by which the preſent Torrent of Vice has been let in upon the Nation, and by which it maintains the Tyranny it has uſurp'd on the Lives of the Inhabitants, are too plain to be hid. The following Sheets aim at the Work, by leading to the moſt direct means, Viz. *Reformation by Example. Laws are,* in Terrorem *Puniſhments, and Magiſtrates*

ſtrates Compel and put a Force upon Mens Minds; but Example is Perſuaſive and Gentle, and draws by a Secret, Inviſible, and almoſt Involuntary Power.

If there can be any Remedies propoſed more proper to bring it to paſs, they that know them would do well to bring them forth. In the mean time the Author thinks Conſcience in the Minds of Men Impartially Conſulted, will give a Probatum *to the following Propoſal; and to that Judgment he refers all thoſe who Object againſt it.*

D. F.

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All the *Proclamations*, *Declarations*, *Acts of Parliament*, &c. which have been, or ſhall be made, or publiſh'd, for a Reformation of Manners, and ſuppreſſing Immorality in the Nation.

IN ſearching for a proper Cure of an Epidemick Diſtemper, Phyſicians tell us 'tis firſt neceſſary to know the Cauſe of that Diſtemper, from what Part of the Body, and from what ill Habit it proceeds; and when the Cauſe is diſcover'd, it is to be removed, that the Effect may ceaſe of it ſelf; but if removing the Cauſe will not work the Cure, then indeed they proceed to apply proper Remedies to the Diſeaſe it ſelf, and the particular part afflicted.

Immorality is without doubt the preſent reigning Diſtemper of the Nation: And the King

King and Parliament, who are the proper Physicians, seem nobly inclin'd to undertake the Cure. 'Tis a Great Work, well worthy their utmost Pains: The Honour of it, were it once perfected, would add more Trophies to the Crown, than all the Victories of *this Bloody War*, or the Glories of *this Honourable Peace*.

But as a Person under the Violence of a Disease sends in vain for a Physician, unless he resolves to make use of his Prescription; so in vain does the King attempt to reform a Nation, unless they are willing to reform themselves, and to submit to his Prescriptions.

Wickedness is an Ancient Inhabitant in this Country; and 'tis very hard to give its Original. But however difficult that may be, 'tis easy to look back to a Time when we were not so generally infected with Vice as we are now; and 'twill seem sufficient to enquire into the Causes of our present Defection.

The Protestant Religion seems to have an unquestion'd Title to the first introducing a strict Morality among us; and 'tis but just to give the Honour of it where 'tis so eminently due. Reformation of Manners has something of a Natural Consequence in it from Reformation in Religion: For since the Principles of the Protestant Religion disown the Indulgencies of the *Roman* Pontiff,

Pontiff, by which a Thouſand Sins are, *as Venial Crimes*, bought off, and the Prieſt, *to ſave God Almighty the trouble*, can blot them out of the Account before it comes to his hand; common Vices loſt their Charter, and men could not ſin at ſo cheap a Rate as before. The Proteſtant Religion has in it ſelf a natural tendency to Virtue, as a ſtanding Teſtimony of its own Divine Original, and accordingly it has very much ſuppreſs'd Vice and Immorality in all the Countries where it has had a Footing: It has civiliz'd Nations, and reform'd the very Tempers of its Profeſſors: Chriſtianity and Humanity has gone hand in hand in the World; and there is ſo viſible a difference between the other Civiliz'd Governments in the World, and thoſe who now are under the Proteſtant Powers, that it carries its Evidence in it ſelf.

The Reformation, begun in *England* in the days of King *Edward* the Sixth, and afterwards glorioufly finiſhed by Queen *Elizabeth*, brought the *Engliſh* Nation to ſuch a degree of Humanity, and Sobriety of Converſation, as we have reaſon to doubt will hardly be ſeen again in our Age.

In King *James* the Firſt's time, the Court affecting ſomething more of Gallantry and Gaiety, Luxury got footing; and Twenty Years Peace, together with no extraordinary Examples from

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the Court, gave too great Encouragement to Licentiouſneſs.

If it got footing in King *James* the Firſt's time, it took a deep Root in the Reign of his Son; and the Liberty given the Soldiery in the Civil War, diſpers'd all manner of Prophaneneſs throughout the Kingdom. That Prince, though very Pious in his own Perſon and Practice, had the Misfortune to be the firſt King of *England*, and perhaps in the whole World, that ever eſtabliſh'd Wickedneſs by a Law: By what unhappy Council, or ſecret ill Fate he was guided to it, is hard to determine; but the *Book of Sports*, as it was called, that Book to tolerate the Exerciſe of of all ſorts of Paſtimes on the Lord's Day, tended more to the vitiating the Practice of this Kingdom, *as to keeping that Day*, than all the Acts of Parliament, Proclamations, and Endeavours of future Princes have done, or perhaps ever will do, to reform it.

And yet the People of *England* expreſs'd a general ſort of Averſion to that Liberty; *and ſome*, as if glutted with too much Freedom, when the Reins of the Law were taken off, refuſed that Practice they allow'd themſelves in before.

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In the time of King *Charles* the Second, Lewdneſs and all manner of Debauchery arriv'd at its Meridian: The Encouragement it had from the Practice and Allowance of the Court, is an invincible Demonſtration how far the Influence of our Governors extends in the Practice of the People.

The preſent King and his late Queen, whoſe Glorious Memory will be dear to the Nation as long as the World ſtands, have had all this wicked Knot to unravel. This was the firſt thing the Queen ſet upon while the King was engaged in his Wars abroad: She firſt gave all ſorts of Vice a general Diſcouragement; and on the contrary, rais'd the value of Virtue and Sobriety by her Royal Example. The King having brought the War to a Glorious Concluſion, and ſettled an Honourable Peace, in his very firſt Speech to his Parliament proclaims a New War againſt Prophaneneſs and Immorality, and goes on alſo to diſcourage the Practice of it by the like Royal Example.

Thus the Work is begun nobly and regularly; and the Parliament, the General Repreſentative of the Nation, readily purſues it by enacting Laws to ſuppreſs all manner of Prophaneneſs, *&c.*

Theſe are Great Things, and well improv'd,

would give an undoubted Overthrow to the Tyranny of Vice, and the Dominion Prophaneneſs has uſurp'd in the hearts of men.

But we of the *Plebeii* find our ſelves juſtly aggriev'd in all this Work of Reformation; and the Partiality of this Reforming Rigor makes the real Work impoſſible: Wherefore we find our ſelves forced to ſeek Redreſs of our Grievances in the old honeſt way of Petitioning Heaven to relieve us: And in the mean time, we ſolemnly Enter our Proteſtation againſt all the Vicious Part of the Nobility and Gentry of the Nation; as follows:

Firſt, We Proteſt, That we do not find impartially enquiring into the matter, and ſpeaking of Moral Gooodneſs, that you are one jot better than we are, *your Dignities, Eſtates and Quality excepted.* 'Tis true, we are all bad enough, and we are willing in good Manners to agree, that we are as wicked as you; but we cannot find on the exacteſt Scutiny, but that in the Commonwealth of Vice, the Devil has taken care to level Poor and Rich into one Claſs, and is fairly going on to make us all Graduates in the laſt degreee of Immorality.

Secondly, We do not find that all the Proclamations, Declarations, and Acts of Parliament yet made, have any *effective Power* to puniſh *you* for

for your Immoralities, as they do us. Now, while *you* make Laws to punish *us*, and let *your selves* go free, though guilty of the same Vices and Immoralities, those Laws are unjust and unequal in themselves.

'Tis true, the Laws do not express a Liberty to *you* and Punishment to *us*; and therefore the King and Parliament are free, as King and Parliament, from this our Appeal; but the Gentry and Magistrates of the Kingdom, while they execute those Laws upon us the poor Commons, and themselves practising the same Crimes, in defiance of the Laws both of God and Man, go unpunish'd; *This* is the Grievance we protest against, as unjust and unequal.

Wherefore, till the Nobility, Gentry, Justices of the Peace, and Clergy, will be pleased either to reform their own Manners, and suppress their own Immoralities, or find out some Method and Power impartially to punish themselves when guilty, we humbly crave leave to object against setting any Poor Man in the Stocks, or sending them to the House of Correction for Immoralities, as the most unequal and unjust way of proceeding in the World.

And now, Gentlemen,

That this Protestation may not seem a little too rude, and a Breach of good Manners to our

Superiors, we crave Leave to ſubjoin our humble Appeal to your ſelves; and will for once, knowing you as *Engliſh* Gentlemen, to be Men of Honour, *make you Judges in your own Caſe.*

Firſt, Gentlemen, We appeal to your ſelves, whether ever it be likely to perfect the Reformation of Manners in this Kingdom, without you; Whether Laws to puniſh us, without your Example alſo to influence us, will ever bring the Work to paſs.

The firſt Step from a looſe vicious Practice in this Nation, was begun by King *Edward* the Sixth, back'd by a Reform'd Clergy, and a Sober Nobility: Queen *Elizabeth* carried it on. 'Twas the Kings and the Gentry which firſt again degenerated from that ſtrict Obſervation of Moral Virtues, and from thence carried Vice on to that degree it now appears in. From the Court Vice took its Progreſs into the Countrey; and in the Families of the Gentry and Nobility it harbour'd, till it took heart under their Protection, and made a general Sally into the Nation; and We the Poor Commons, who have been always eaſy to be guided by the Example of our Landlords and Gentlemen, have really been debauch'd into Vice by their Examples: And it muſt be the *Example of you the Nobility and Gentry of the Kingdom*, that muſt put a Stop to

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the Flood of Vice and Prophaneneſs which is broken in upon the Countrey, or it will never be done.

Our Laws againſt all manner of Vicious Practices are already very ſevere: But Laws are uſeleſs inſignificant things, if the Executive Power which lies in the Magiſtrate be not exerted. The Juſtices of the Peace have the Power to puniſh, but if they do not put forth that Power, 'tis all one as if they had none at all: Some have poſſibly exerted this Power; but whereever it has been ſo put forth, it has fallen upon us the poor Commons: Theſe are all Cobweb Laws, in which the ſmall Flies are catch'd, and the great ones break through. My Lord-Mayor has whipt about the poor Beggars, and a few ſcandalous Whores have been ſent to the Houſe of Correction; ſome Alehouſekeepers and Vintners have been Fin'd for drawing Drink on the Sabbath-day; but all this falls upon us of the Mob, the poor *Plebeii*, as if all the Vice lay among us; for we do not find the Rich Drunkard carri'd before my Lord Mayor, nor a Swearing Lewd Merchant Fin'd, or Set in the Stocks. *The man with a Gold Ring and Gay Cloths*, may Swear before the Juſtice, or at the Juſtice; may reel home through the open Streets, and no man take any notice;

tice of it; but if a poor man get drunk, or ſwear an Oath, he muſt to the Stocks without Remedy.

In the ſecond place, We appeal to your ſelves, Whether Laws or Proclamations are capable of having any Effect towards a Reformation of Manners, while the very Benches of our Juſtices are infected with the ſcandalous Vices of Swearing and Drunkenneſs; while our Juſtices themſelves ſhall puniſh a man for Drunkenneſs, with a *God damn him, ſet him in the Stocks:* And if Laws and Proclamations are uſeleſs in the Caſe, then they are good for nothing, and had as good be let alone as publiſh'd.

'Tis hard, Gentlemen, to be puniſh'd for a Crime, by a man as guilty as our ſelves; and that the Figure a man makes in the World, muſt be the reaſon why he ſhall or ſhall not be liable to a Law: This is really puniſhing men for being poor, which is no Crime at all; as a Thief may be ſaid to be hang'd, not for the Fact, but for being taken.

We further Appeal to your ſelves, Gentlemen, to inform us, whether there be any particular reaſon why you ſhould be allow'd the full Career of your corrupt Appetites, without the Reſtraint of Laws, while you your ſelves agree that ſuch Offences ſhall be puniſhed in us, and do really execute the Law upon the Poor People,

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when brought before you for the ſame things.

Wherefore, That the Work of Reformation of Manners may go on, and be brought to Perfection, to the Glory of God, and the great Honour of the King and Parliament: That Debauchery and Prophaneneſs, Drunkenneſs, Whoring, and all ſorts of Immoralities may be ſuppreſs'd, we humbly propoſe the Method which may effectually accompliſh ſo great a Work.

(1.) That the Gentry and Clergy, who are the Leaders of us poor ignorant people, and our Lights erected on high places to guide and govern us, would in the firſt place put a voluntary force upon themſelves, and effectually reform their own Lives, their way of Converſing, and their common Behaviour among their Servants and Neighbours.

1. The Gentry. They are the Original of the Modes, and Cuſtoms, and Manners of their Neighbours; and their Examples *in the Countries eſpecially* are very moving. There are three ſeveral Vices, which have the principal Management of the greateſt part of Mankind, *viz.* Drunkenneſs, Swearing, and Whoring; all of them very ill becoming a Gentleman, however Cuſtom may have made them Modiſh: Where none of theſe Three are in a Houſe, there is certainly ſomething of a Plantation of God in the Family;

Family; for they are ſuch Epidemick Diſtempers, that hardly Human Nature is entirely free from them.

1. Drunkenneſs, that brutiſh Vice; a Sin ſo ſordid, and ſo much a Force upon Nature, that had God Almighty enjoyn'd it a Duty, I believe many a man would have ventur'd the loſs of Heaven, rather than have perform'd it. The Pleaſure of it ſeems to be ſo ſecretly hid, that wild Heathen Nations know nothing of the matter; 'tis only diſcover'd by the wiſe people of theſe *Northern* Countries, who are grown Proficients in Vice, Philoſophers in Wickedneſs, who can extract a Pleaſure to themſelves in loſing their Underſtanding, and make themſelves ſick at heart for their Diverſion.

If the Hiſtory of this well-bred Vice was to be written, 'twould plainly appear that it begun among the Gentry, and from them was handed down to the poorer ſort, who ſtill love to be like their Betters. After the Reſtitution of King *Charles* the Second, when drinking the King's Health became the diſtinction between a *Cavalier* and a *Roundhead*, Drunkenneſs *began its Reign*, and it has Reign'd almoſt Forty Years: The Gentry careſs'd this Beaſtly Vice at ſuch a Rate, that no Companion, no Servant was thought proper, unleſs he could bear a Quantity of Wine;

Wine; And to this day 'tis added to the Character of a Man, as an additional Title, when you would ſpeak well of him, *He is an honeſt drunken Fellow*; as if his Drunkenneſs was a Recommendation of his Honeſty. From the practice of this naſty Faculty, our Gentlemen have arriv'd to the teaching of it; and that it might be effectually preſerv'd to the next Age, have very early inſtructed the Youth in it. Nay, ſo far has Cuſtom prevail'd, that the Top of a Gentleman's Entertainment has been to make his Friend drunk; and the Friend is ſo much reconcil'd to it, that he takes that for the effect of his Kindneſs, which he ought as much to be affronted at, as if he had kick'd him down Stairs: Thus 'tis become a Science; and but that the Inſtruction proves ſo eaſy, and the Youth too apt to learn, poſſibly we might have had a Colledge erected for it before now. The further perfection of this Vice among the Gentry, will appear in two things; that 'tis become the Subject of their Glory, and the way of expreſſing their Joy for any publick Bleſſing. *Jack*, ſaid a Gentleman of very high Quality, when after the Debate in the Houſe of Lords, King *William* was voted into the vacant Throne; *Jack*, (ſays he) *God damn ye* Jack, *go home to your Lady, and tell her we have got a Proteſtant King and Queen; and go*

and make a Bonfire as big as a Houſe, and bid the Butler make ye all drunk, ye Dog: Here was Sacrificing to the Devil, for a Thankſgiving to God. Other Vices are committed as Vices, and men act them in private, and are willing to hide them; but Drunkenneſs they are ſo fond of, that they will glory in it, boaſt of it, and endeavour to promote it as much as poſſible in others: 'Tis a Triumph to a Champion of the Bottle, to repeat how many Quarts of Wine he has drank at a ſitting, and how he made ſuch and ſuch honeſt Fellows drunk. Men *Lye* and *Forſwear*, and *hide it*, and are *aſham'd of it*, as indeed they have reaſon to do: But Drunkenneſs and Whoring are Accompliſhments People value themſelves upon, repeat them with pleaſure, and affect a ſort of Vanity in the Hiſtory; are content all the World ſhould be Witneſſes of their Intemperance, have made the Crime a Badge of Honour to their Breeding, and introduce the practice as a Faſhion. And whoever gives himſelf the trouble to reflect on the Cuſtom of our Gentlemen in their Families, encouraging and promoting this Vice of Drunkenneſs among the poor Commons, will not think it a Scandal upon the Gentry of *England*, if we ſay, That the Mode of drinking, as 'tis now practiſed, had its Original from the Practice of the Country Gentlemen, and they again from the Court.

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It may be objected, and God forbid it ſhould not, That there are a great many of our Nobility and Gentlemen, who are Men of Honour and Men of Morals; and therefore this Charge is not univerſal. To which we anſwer, 'Tis univerſal for all that, becauſe thoſe very Gentlemen, though they are negatively clear as to the Commiſſion of the Crimes we ſpeak of, yet are poſitively guilty, in not executing that Power the Law has put into their hands, with an Impartial Vigor. For where was that Gentleman or Juſtice of the Peace ever yet found, who executed the Terms of the Law upon a Drunken, Swearing, Lewd Gentleman, his Neighbour, but the Quality of the Perſon has been a Licenſe to the open Exerciſe of the worſt Crimes, as if there were any Baronets, Knights, or Squires in the next World; who becauſe of thoſe little ſteps Cuſtom had raiſed them on, higher than their Neighbours, ſhould be exempted from the Divine Judicature; or that as Captain *Vrats* ſaid, who was Hang'd for Murthering Eſquire *Lynn*, *God would ſhow them ſome reſpect as they were Gentlemen.*

If there were any reaſon why a Rich Man ſhould be permitted in the publick Exerciſe of Open Immoralities, and not the Poor Man, ſomething might be ſaid: But if there be any difference

ference it lies the other way; for the Vices of a Poor Man affect only himself; but the Rich Man's Wickedness affects all the Neighbourhood, gives offence to the Sober, encourages and hardens the Lewd, and quite overthrows the weak Resolutions of such as are but indifferently fix'd in their Virtue and Morality. *If my own Watch goes false, it deceives me and none else; but if the Town-Clock goes false, it deceives the whole Parish.* The Gentry are the Leaders of the Mob; if they are Lewd and Drunken, the others strive to imitate them; if they Discourage Vice and Intemperance, the other will not be so forward in it, nor so fond of it.

To think then to effect a Reformation by Punishing the Poor, while the Rich seem to Enjoy a Charter for wickedness, is like *taking away the Effect, that the Cause may cease.*

We find some People very fond of Monopolizing a Vice, they would have all of it to themselves; they must, as my Lord *Rochester* said of himself, *Sin like a Lord*; little sneaking Sins won't serve turn; but they must be Lewd at a rate above the Common Size, to let the World see they are capable of it.

Our Laws seem to take no Cognizance of such, perhaps for the same reason that *Lycurgus* made no Law against *Parricide*, because he would

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not have the Sin named among his Citizens.

Now the Poor Man ſees no ſuch Dignity in Vice, as to ſtudy Degrees; we are downright in Wickedneſs, as we are in our Dealings; if we are Drunk, 'tis plain Drunkenneſs; Swearing, and Whoring, is all Blunderbus with us; we don't affect ſuch Niceties in our Converſation; and the Juſtices uſe us accordingly; nothing but the Stocks, or the Houſe of Correction is the Caſe, when we are brought before them; but when our Maſters the Gentlemen come to their Refin'd Practice, and Sin by the Rules of Quality, we find nothing comes of it but falſe Heraldry, the Vice is puniſh'd by the Vice, and the Puniſhment renews the Crime.

The Caſe in ſhort is this; the Lewdneſs, Prophaneneſs, and Immorality of the Gentry, which is the main Cauſe of the General Debauchery of the Kingdom, is not at all toucht by our Laws, as they are now Executed; and while it remains ſo, the Reformation of Manners can never be brought to paſs, nor Prophaneneſs and Immorality Suppreſs'd; and therefore the Puniſhing the Poor diſtinctly, is a Mock upon the good Deſigns of the King and Parliament; an Act of Injuſtice upon them to puniſh them, and let others who are as guilty go free; and a ſort of Cruelty too, in taking the advantage

of

of their Poverty to make them ſuffer, becauſe they want Eſtates to purchaſe their Exemption.

We have ſome weak Excuſes for this Matter, which muſt be conſidered: As;

(1). The Juſtice of the Peace is a *Paſſive Magiſtrate*, till an Information be brought before him, and is not to take notice of any thing, but as it is laid in Fact, and brought to an Affidavit. Now if an Affidavit be made before a Juſtice, that ſuch or ſuch a man Swore, or was Drunk, he muſt, he cannot avoid Fining him; the Law obliges him to it, let his Quality be what it will; ſo that the Defect is not in the Law, nor in the Juſtice, but in the want of Information.

(2). The Name of an Evidence or Informer is ſo ſcandalous, that to attempt to inform againſt a man for the moſt open Breach of the Laws of Morality, is enough to denominate a man unfit for Society; a Rogue and an Informer are Synonimous in the Vulgar Acceptation; ſo much is the real Detection of the openeſt Crimes againſt God, and Civil Government, Diſcouraged and Avoided.

(3). The Impoſſibility of the Cure is ſuch, and the Habit has ſo obtain'd upon all Mankind, that it ſeems twiſted with Human Nature, as an Appendix to Natural Frailty, which it is impoſſible to ſeparate from it

For

For Answer;

1. 'Tis true, the Justice of the Peace is in some respect a *Passive Magistrate*, and does not act but by Information, but such Information would be brought if it were encouraged; if Justices of the Peace did acquaint themselves with their Neighbourhood, they would soon hear of the Immoralities of the Parish; and if they did impartially Execute the Law on such as offended, without respect of Person, they would soon have an Account of the Persons and Circumstances. Besides, 'tis not want of Information, but want of punishing what they have Information of. A Poor Man informs against a Great Man, the Witness is discouraged, the man goes unpunish'd, and the Poor Man gets the scandal of an Informer; and then 'tis but too often that our Justices are not men of extraordinary Morals themselves; and who shall Inform a Justice of the Peace that such a man Swore, when he may be heard to Swear himself as fast as another? or who shall bring a man before a Justice for being Drunk, when the Justice is so Drunk himself, he cannot order him to be set in the Stocks?

(2.) Besides, the Justice has a power to punish any Fact he himself sees committed, and to enquire into any he hears of casually; and if he will stand still and see those Acts of Immorality

lity committed before his Face, who shall bring a Poor Man before him to be punished? Thus I have heard a Thousand horrid Oaths sworn on a Bowling-Green, in the presence of a Justice of the Peace, and he take no notice of it, and go home the next hour, and set a man in the Stocks for being Drunk.

As to the Scandal of Informing, *'tis an Error in Custom*, and a great Sin against Justice; 'tis necessary indeed that all Judgment should be according to Evidence, and to discourage Evidence, is to discourage Justice; but that a man in Trial of the Morality of his Neighbour, should be ashamed to appear, must have some particular Cause.

(1.) It proceeds from the Modishness of the Vice; it has so obtain'd upon mens Practices, that to appear against what almost all men approve, seems malicious, and has a certain prospect either of Revenge, or of a Mercenary Wretch, that Informs meerly to get a Reward. 'Tis true, if no Reward be plac'd upon an Information, no man will take the trouble; and again, if too great a Reward, Men of Honour shun the thing, because they scorn the Fee; and to Inform meerly for the Fee, has something of a Rascal in it too; and from these Reasons arises the backwardness of the People.

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The very ſame Rich men we ſpeak of are the perſons who diſcourage the Diſcovery of Vice, by ſcandalizing the Informer; a man that is any thing of a Gentleman ſcorns it, and the Poor ſtill Mimick the Humour of the Rich, and hate an Informer as they do the Devil. 'Tis ſtrange the Gentlemen ſhould be aſham'd to detect the Breach of thoſe Laws, which they were not aſham'd to make; but the very Name of an Informer has gain'd ſo black an Idea in the minds of People, becauſe ſome who have made a Trade of Informing againſt People for Religion, have misbehaved themſelves, that truly 'twill be hard to bring any man either of Credit or Quality to attempt it.

But the main thing which makes our Gentlemen backward in the proſecution of Vice, is their practiſing the ſame Crimes themſelves, and they have ſo much wicked Modeſty and Generoſity in them, being really no Enemies to the thing it ſelf, that they cannot with any ſort of freedom puniſh in others, what they practiſe themſelves.

In the Times of Executing the Laws againſt Diſſenters, we found a great many Gentlemen very Vigorous in proſecuting their Neighbours; they did not ſtick to appear in Perſon to diſturb Meetings, and demoliſh the Meeting-Houſes, and rather than fail, would be Informers themſelves;

ſelves; the reaſon was becauſe they had alſo a diſlike to the think; but we never found a Diſſenting Gentleman, or Juſtice of the Peace forward to do thus, becauſe they approved of it. Now were our Gentlemen and Magiſtrates real Enemies to the Immoralities of this Age, did they really hate Drunkenneſs as a Vice, they would be forward and zealous to root the practice of it out of the Neighbourhood, they would not be backward or aſham'd to detect Vice, to diſturb Drunken Aſſemblies, to diſperſe thoſe Plantations of Leachery, the Publick Bawdy-Houſes, which are almoſt as openly allowed as the *Burdelloes* in *Italy*. They would be willing to have all ſorts of Vices Suppreſs'd, and glory in putting their hands to the Work; they would not be aſham'd to appear in the detecting Debauchery, nor afraid to embroil themſelves with their Rich Neighbours. 'Tis Guilt of the ſame Fact which makes Connivance, and till that Guilt be removed, the Gentlemen of *England* neither will, nor can indeed with any kind of Honour put their hands to the work of Reforming it in their Neighbours.

But I think 'tis eaſy to make it appear that this difficulty of Informing may be removed, and there need not be much occaſion for that Scandalous Employment.

'Tis

'Tis in the power of the Gentry of *England* to Reform the whole Kingdom without either Laws, Proclamations, or Informers; and without their Concurrence, all the Laws, Proclamations, and Declarations in the World will have no Effect; the Vigour of the Laws conſiſts in their Executive Power; Ten thouſand Acts of Parliament ſignify no more than One ſingle Proclamation, unleſs the Gentlemen, in whoſe hands the Execution of thoſe Laws is placed, take care to ſee them duly made uſe of; and how can Laws be duly Executed, but by an Impartial Diſtribution of equal Rewards and Puniſhments, without regard to the Quality and Degree of the Perſons? The Laws puſh on the Juſtices now, and they take care to go no faſter than they are driven; but would the Juſtices puſh on the Laws, Vice would flee before them as Duſt in the Wind, and Immoralities would be ſoon Suppreſs'd; but it can never be expected that the Magiſtrates ſhould puſh on the Laws to a free Suppreſſion of Immoralities, till they Reform themſelves, and their Great Neighbours Reform themſelves, that there may be none to puniſh who are too big for the Magiſtrate to venture upon.

Would the Gentry of *England* decry the Modiſhneſs of Vice by their own Practice; would

they daſh it out of Countenance by diſowning it; that Drunkeneſs and Oaths might once come into *diſeſteem*, and be out of Faſhion, and a man be valued the leſs for them; that he that will Swear, and be Drunk, ſhall be counted a *Rake*, and not fit for a Gentleman's Company. This would do more to Reforming the reſt of Mankind, than all the Puniſhments the Law can inflict; the Evil encreaſed by Example, and muſt be ſuppreſs'd the ſame way. If the Gentry were thus Reform'd, their Families would be ſo too: No Servant would be Entertain'd, no Workman Employ'd, no Shopkeeper would be Traded with by a Gentleman, but ſuch as like themſelves, were Sober and Honeſt; *a Lewd, Vicious, Drunken Footman muſt Reform or Starve*, he would get no Service; a Servant once turn'd away for his Intemperance, would be entertain'd by no body elſe; *a Swearing Debauch'd Labourer or Workman muſt Reform, or no body would Employ him*; the Drunken whoring Shopkeeper muſt grow Sober, or loſe all his Cuſtomers and be Undone. *Intereſt and good Manners would Reform us* of the poorer ſort, there would be no need of the Stocks or Houſes of Correction; *we ſhould be ſober of courſe, becauſe we ſhould be all Beggars elſe*; and he that lov'd his Vice ſo dearly as to purchaſe it with the loſs of his Trade or Employment,

ployment, *would ſoon grow too poor for his Vice, and be forced to leave it by his own Neceſſities*; there would be no need of Informers, a Vicious Fellow would be preſently Notorious, he would be the Talk of the Town, every one would ſlight and ſhun him for fear of being thought like him by being ſeen in his Company; he would expoſe himſelf, and would be puniſh'd as unpitied as a Thief.

So that in ſhort, the whole Weight of this Bleſſed Work of Reformation lies on the ſhoulders of the Gentry; they are the Cauſe of our Defection, which being taken away, the Effect would ceaſe of courſe, Vice would grow Scandalous, and all Mankind would be aſham'd of it.

(2.) The Clergy alſo ought not to count themſelves exempted in this matter, whoſe Lives have been, and in ſome places ſtill are ſo Vicious and ſo looſe, that 'tis well for *England* we are not ſubject to be much *Prieſt-ridden.*

'Tis a ſtrange thing how it ſhou'd be otherwiſe than it is with us the poor Commonalty, when the Gentry our Patern, and the Clergy our Teachers, are as Immoral as we. And then to conſider the Coherence of the thing; the *Parſon preaches a thundering Sermon againſt Drunkenneſs, and the Juſtice of Peace ſets my poor Neighbour in the Stocks, and I am like to be much the better for*

either,

either, when I know perhaps that this ſame Parſon and this ſame Juſtice were both Drunk together but the Night before.

It may be true, for ought we know, that a Wicked Parſon may make a good Sermon; and the *Spaniſh* Proverb, may be true of the Soul as well as the Body, *If the Cure be but wrought, let the Devil be the Doctor*; but this does not take with the downright ignorant People in the Country; a poor Man gets Drunk in a Country Ale-houſe, *Why, are you not aſham'd to be ſuch a Beaſt, ſays a good honeſt Neighbour to him the next day?* Aſham'd, ſays the Fellow! Why ſhould I be aſham'd? Why, there was Sir *John*—— and Sir *Robert*—— and the Parſon, and they were all as Drunk as I. And why a Beaſt, Pray? I heard Sir *Robert* —— ſay, That

He that Drinks leaſt,
Drinks moſt like a Beaſt.

A Vicious Parſon that preaches well, but lives ill, may be like an unskilful Horſeman, who opens a Gate on the wrong ſide, and lets other Folks through, but ſhuts himſelf out. This may be poſſible, but it ſeems moſt reaſonable to think they are a means by that ſort of living to hinder both themſelves and others; and would the Gentry and Clergy of *England* but look back a little on the Guilt that really lies on

on them, as Gentlemen by whoſe Example ſo great a part of Mankind has been led into, and encouraged in the Progreſs of Vice, they would find Matter of very ſerious reflection.

This Article of the Clergy may ſeem to lie in the power of their Superiors to rectify, and therefore may be ſomething more feaſible than the other; but the Gentry who are *Sui juris*, can no way be reduced but by their own voluntary practice. We are in *England* exceedingly govern'd by Modes and Cuſtoms. The Gentry may effectually Suppreſs Vice, would they but put it out of Faſhion; but to Suppreſs it by Force ſeems impoſſible.

The Application of this rough Doctrine is in ſhort both to the Gentry and Clergy, *Phyſicians Heal your ſelves*; if you will leave off your Drunkenneſs and Lewdneſs firſt, if we do not follow you, then ſet us in the Stocks, and ſend us to the Houſe of Correction, and puniſh us as you pleaſe; if you will leave off Whoring firſt, then Brand us in the Foreheads, or Tranſport or Hang us for Fornication or Adultery, and you are welcome; but to preach againſt Drunkenneſs immediately after an Evening's Debauch; to Correct a poor Fellow for Swearing with the very Vice in your Mouths; theſe are the unjuſteſt ways in the World, and have

in

in themſelves no manner of tendency towards the Reformation of Manners, which is the true Deſign of the Law.

'Tis acknowledg'd there are in *England* a great many Sober, Pious, Religious Perſons, both among the Gentry and Clergy, and 'tis hoped ſuch cannot think themſelves Libell'd or Injur'd in this Plea; if there were not, Laws would never have been made againſt thoſe Vices, *for no men make Laws to puniſh themſelves*; 'tis deſign'd to reflect upon none but ſuch as are Guilty, and on them no farther than to put them in mind how much the Nation owes its preſent Degeneracy to their folly, and how much it is in their power to Reform it again by their Example; that the King may not publiſh Proclamations, nor the Parliament make Laws to no purpoſe; but that we might live in *England* once more like Chriſtians, and like Gentlemen, to the Glory of God, and the Honour of the preſent King and Parliament, who ſo publickly have attempted the great Work of Reformation among us, though hitherto to ſo little purpoſe.

FINIS.